

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 DUBLIN 00423 061830Z

14-11

ACTION EUR-12

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R 061622Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6536

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL BELFAST

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, EI

SUBJECT: NARROW WINS FOR OPPOSITION IN TWO BY-ELECTIONS

1. DEATH OF TWO OPPOSITION DEPUTIES IN GALWAY REQUIRED BY-ELECTIONS MARCH 4. FIANNA FAIL PARTY NOMINATED A SON OF ONE DECEASED DEPUTY AND A DAUGHTER OF THE OTHER FOR THE VACANCIES. BOTH WERE VIRTUAL CERTAINTIES TO WIN. WHEN VOTE COUNTS WERE COMPLETED MARCH 5, FIANNA FAIL CANDIDATES HAD INDEED WON, BUT BY MARGINS MUCH NARROWER THAN THEIR PARTY OBTAINED IN LAST GENERAL ELECTION. CANDIDATES OF GOVERNING COALITION PARTIES (FINE GAEL AND LABOR) INCREASED THEIR PERCENTAGES OF VOTE. FURTHER, SECOND-PREFERENCE VOTES TRANSFERRED SMOOTHLY BETWEEN GOVERNING PARTIES, LEADING TO CONCLUSION THAT PUBLIC SUPPORTS IDEA OF COALITION GOVERNMENT.

2. AS A RULE, "MORAL VICTORIES" DO NOT COUNT FOR MUCH IN IRISH POLITICS, BUT GOI IS GENUINELY PLEASED BY NARROW LOSSES ON THIS OCCASION. MID-TERM BY-ELECTIONS ARE TRADITIONALLY DIFFICULT FOR GOVERNING PARTIES. AT THE END OF A DISASTROUS YEAR FOR IRISH ECONOMY, SOME SWING AGAINST GOVERNMENT COULD CERTAINLY HAVE BEEN EXPECTED. FIANNA FAIL MEMBERS ARE DISCOURAGED BY FAILURE TO CAPITALIZE ON THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, EVEN IN A TRADITIONAL WESTERN STRONGHOLD. THERE WAS NO SIGN OF THE STRONG SWING TOWARD OPPOSITION THAT WOULD BE NECESSARY IF FIANNA FAIL IS TO HAVE ANY CHANCE OF WINNING IN NEXT GENERAL ELECTION. THERE MAY NOW EVEN

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PAGE 02 DUBLIN 00423 061830Z

BE SOME TALK OF A SNAP GENERAL ELECTION, THOUGH PRIME MINISTER

COSGRAVE'S CAUTIOUS STYLE DOES NOT LEND ITSELF WELL TO ADVENTURES OF THIS KIND.

3. ACCORDING TO BOTH SIDES, LEADING ISSUE OF BY-ELECTION CAMPAIGN WAS PERFORMANCE OF GOVERNMENT VS OPPOSITION. FIANNA FAIL IS CONSIDERED TO HAVE THE BEST LEADER (JACK LYNCH) BUT TO BE VERY SHORT OF TALENT ELSEWHERE, AND TO LACK POLICIES. SITUATION IN GOI IS THE OPPOSITE: PM COSGRAVE IS CONSIDERED DULL AND UNIMAGINATIVE, BUT HIS FRONT BENCH IS MUCH BETTER THAN OPPOSITION'S. PARADOXICALLY, RESULTS OF THIS ELECTION COULD WEAKEN LYNCH'S LEADERSHIP, EVEN THOUGH HE IS HIS PARTY'S MAIN ELECTORAL ASSET.

4. A SINN FEIN CANDIDATE IN ONE DISTRICT FAILED DISMALLY, WINNING ONLY 2.4 PERCENT OF VOTES CAST.  
MOORE

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## Message Attributes

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